

## **Juvenile Hall**

On November 22, 2004, members of the Grand Jury toured the Juvenile Hall. Juvenile Hall is in the Juvenile Service Center which is located on Highway 1, just north of the city limits of San Luis Obispo. The facility is under the direction of the Chief Probation Officer for the County of San Luis Obispo.

The mission of the Juvenile Hall is to help youth offenders become law abiding, healthy, productive citizens. Posters throughout the facility remind the youths to “Stop, It Is Your Choice.”

### **Authority/Jurisdiction for the Inquiry**

The California Penal Code § 919 (b) states, “the grand jury shall inquire into the condition and management of public prisons within the county.”

### **Method**

The information contained in this report was obtained through visits to the Juvenile Hall, Juvenile Court, interviews with the judge of Juvenile Court, and correctional officers and staff.

### **Narrative**

The Juvenile Hall houses youth offenders that may be a danger to the public or to themselves. We were informed that 97% of the youth offenders in Juvenile Hall are detained because of substance abuses such as drugs and alcohol. Sixty days is the average length of time a youth offender is held at the facility, however, they can be there as long as a year. Currently, there is a 12% recidivism (return) rate. The posters titled, “Stop, It Is Your Choice”, placed throughout the facility are to remind individuals to stop and think of the consequences of their actions.

**Housing**

The Juvenile Hall facility has the capacity to house 45, and as of November 22, 2004 had 41 occupants. Within the next two years, 20 beds will be added. There are three units at Juvenile Hall, the East unit which houses males (primarily ages 13-15 years) and females (ages range from 12-18), the West unit which houses only older males who are the more serious offenders, and the Center unit which is primarily used for housing only of older males ages 14-18. There are five levels of assessments for the youths being held at Juvenile Hall.

The lower level cells are single occupancy; the upper level cells are double occupancy. All cells are clean and well maintained. The facility has recently installed beds and door knobs with a safer design in order to help prevent suicide attempts. They are now in the process of upgrading the bathrooms to also aid in preventing suicide attempts. Restrooms and shower stalls were clean and well maintained. During our tour, we were informed that all youth detainees, while in their cells are monitored every 15 minutes or more frequently if suicidal.

**Education and Recreation**

Youth offenders housed at the facility must attend six hours of school a day. School programs are developed and delivered for each youth's individual learning needs, including one currently being administered in Spanish. Two credentialed teachers monitor the learning environment and individuals as they study and complete assignments.

"The Healing Touch" program is intended to help youth detainees become law abiding, healthy, productive citizens. In this program, dogs from the animal shelter are brought in to the facility every Tuesday and Friday for the program participants to learn how to provide the dogs with obedience training. Through this experience, youth offenders learn how to care for others and gain self esteem and confidence in themselves. There is time each day for recreation activities. There are several sports areas outdoors. The yards are clean and well maintained.

**Medical**

A nurse practitioner performs an entry exam on all juveniles within four days of their being sent to the facility. Nursing staff and mental health therapists at the facility attend to the medical and mental health needs of the detainees. A pediatrician is on call when needed and psychiatrists visit the facility twice a week to perform medi-evaluations. While sick call is provided every day, the youth detainees are provided with medical/mental health request forms on a 24hour/7day basis. Once a form is completed by a youth, the nurse is called to review the request and to provide the appropriate medical/mental attention. Medications are monitored monthly for expiration. We verified that the medications were monitored and that there were none with expired dates in the cabinet.

**Conclusion**

The Juvenile Hall is a small facility that is well maintained. Steps are being taken to improve the housing cells and treatment programs for those who are in need.

**Required Responses**

This is an informational report. No formal response is required.